



Rounding Out the “Tip of the Spear!”

by Captain Mark C. Weaver

Communicating through an interpreter, the engineer asks the Afghani school principal to describe what the school was like before it was destroyed in the civil war. The principal points to the ruins and describes how the mud wall remnants used to be fully functional classrooms with chalkboards, desks, doors, and windows before the civil war. The engineer measures the classrooms, gathers additional details, and returns to the safe house compound in Kabul where he sits at a laptop in a converted garage to write a technical statement of work, which soon becomes the key component of a contract for local Afghani contractors to bid on. Although this overseas humanitarian, disaster, and civic aid (OHDACA) project is one of over 200 being worked by civil affairs tactical teams, it is unique because of who is providing the engineer support. It is not an Army Reserve civil affairs engineer officer, nor is it an Active Duty engineer officer — it is, surprisingly, an active duty armor officer on loan from the 1st Cavalry Division as an augmentee to Operation Enduring Freedom.

When lieutenants select their branch assignments, there are select few who choose, for their own reasons, to be com-

bat arms officers. These lieutenants know that at the conclusion of their career, there will be little practical application of their combat arms skills that relate to civilian jobs. However, they are more concerned with being leaders at the “tip of the spear,” who, as part of their job descriptions, can feel the rush and adrenaline of commanding great soldiers on the world’s greatest tanks. Soldier Training Publication (STP) 17-12AII-OFS-1, *Officer Foundation Standards, Armor Company Grade Officer, 12A, Captain*, lists the tasks a company grade Armor officer must be able to perform.¹ A partial list of these tasks include:

- Conduct intelligence preparation of the battlefield.
- Conduct maneuver.
- Conduct a breach.
- Conduct an attack by fire.
- Conduct an assault.
- Conduct a defense in sector.

One of the last things an armor officer expects to do when he initially branches armor is to conduct stability and stabilization or peacekeeping operations such as providing humanitarian support and presence patrols. But, in today’s ever-changing Army, an officer can expect to

participate in a multitude of deployments other than combat training center rotations and combat operations. With the exception of the recent Operation Iraqi Freedom, the U.S. Army has been transitioning from full-scale combat operations to peace enforcement and security operations.

Since 1982, the United States, along with 10 other nations, has been participating with the Multi-National Forces and Observers (MFO) in the Sinai. The MFO observes, verifies, and reports on Egyptian and Israeli forces to enforce the 1978 Camp David Accords and 1979 Treaty of Peace.

In December 1995, the 1st Armored Division’s Task Force Eagle, as part of Operation Joint Endeavor, led the 12-nation coalition Implementation Force (IFOR) into Bosnia-Herzegovina to implement the Dayton Peace Accords. As the situation in Bosnia improved, the IFOR transitioned to a Stabilization Force (SFOR), Operation Joint Guard, during December 1996, and then transitioned again in June 1998 to Operation Joint Forge, with the arrival of the 1st Cavalry Division. Finally, the 1st Infantry Division formed the first Task Force Falcon in February

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1999 to participate in the NATO-led, seven-nation coalition, Multi-National Brigade (MNB) (East). As an extension of the Bosnia mission, the MNB(E) is a component of the Kosovo Force (KFOR) and conducts peacekeeping operations in the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia's Serbian Kosovo province.

All of these missions share a common theme, in that combat arms forces are conducting peacekeeping-focused operations with vehicles and weapons systems other than the M1 main battle tank and the M2 Bradley Fighting Vehicle. However, they are not the only examples of armor officers conducting other-than-armor operations. Due to other worldwide events, such as counter-narcotic operations and the global war on terrorism, the military is conducting an increasing number of worldwide operations.



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In previous years, these operations, which are usually limited in nature, have fallen under the operational control of the Special Operations Command (SOCOM) at McDill Air Force Base, or under brigade combat teams such as the IFOR, SFOR, and KFOR; however, the recent trend of employing conventional with unconventional forces in so many locations requires the military to stand up joint or coalition headquarters. One of the effects created by adding these headquarters is the need for additional personnel to operate them 24-hours a day for extended time periods. The Army meets this need by using individual augmentation orders.

Individual augmentees help fill various positions such as manpower, planning officers, and battle captains. Due to the general nature of augmentee assignments, the Army classifies the majority of these taskings as 01A non-branch specific. The U.S. Army Personnel Command (PERS-COM) then assigns these requirements to be filled by the various divisions throughout the Army. Individual augmentation orders are growing increasingly frequent throughout the Army.

Once a soldier is alerted for one of these individual assignments, they report to the CONUS Replacement Center (CRC) at Fort Benning, Georgia. The CRC is operated by the 11th Infantry Regiment (Garrison Command) at Fort Benning, and has the sole mission of processing individuals and units for deployment to theaters of operations.² Along with Army augmentation missions, the replacement center also prepares Navy, Marine Corps, and Air Force personnel from all components, as well as civilian contractors, Department of Defense civilians, Army and Air Force Exchange Service employees, American Red Cross volunteers, and U.S. Army Reserve units.

Upon arrival, the CRC begins deployment preparation validating soldier readiness processing (SRP), individual common task training (CTT), weapons qualification, and special equipment/clothing issue. Typically, arriving on Sunday night, individuals conduct their SRP on Monday, followed immediately by required training and clothing issues. By Thursday, most individuals have completed their paperwork and training and are prepared to depart. The CRC then coordinates transportation into theater and the individuals usually leave by Saturday afternoon. This coordinated and stream-

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lined approach to deploying individuals is highly beneficial because it consolidates all resources and is focused on the individual, something not typically available for a lone soldier attempting to deploy from home station.

Once in theater, individual augmentee assignments are widely varied. These assignments are challenging and will expose augmentees to higher echelon operations and planning processes. Additionally, since most of the assignments are conducted alongside our sister services and allies, augmentees gain invaluable insight into joint and coalition operations. While the skills required by augmentees usually revolve around their ability to operate word processing, PowerPoint, and e-mail software, this is not their greatest contribution to the assigned headquarters. Unlike their combat support and combat service support brethren, combat arms officers bring the ability to apply tactical knowledge to current situations and provide their respective staff sections with intelligent, experience-based input.

This type of deployment provides the opportunity to break the monotony of home-station training, gain understanding of higher echelon operations, work with allies, and participate in real-world operations. Tip of the spear combat arms officers may not be conducting combat operations from the tank commander's seat, but they will be better prepared to be professionals. The benefits of these augmentation missions far outweigh the costs associated with the temporary absence of an officer while he is deployed.



Notes

¹Soldier Training Publication (STP) 17-12AII-OFS-1, *Officer Foundation Standards, Armor Company Grade Office, 12A, Captain* (Volume 1), U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Command, Fort Monroe, VA, 31 July 2000.

²<http://www.benning.army.mil/crc/>

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